

ITALIAN UFO REPORTER

Newsletter of the Italian Center for UFO Studies
C.I.S.U. - Corso Vittorio Emanuele 108 - 10121 Torino - Italia

Issue No. 8

November 1988

SPECIAL ISSUE

FIRST EUROPEAN CONGRESS ON ANOMALOUS AERIAL PHENOMENA

THE ITALIAN PAPERS

On November 11, 12 and 13, 1988 the "First European Congress on Anomalous Aerial Phenomena: Physical and Psycho-social Aspects" is to be hosted in Brussels (Belgium) by the "Société Belge d'Etude des Phénomènes Spatiaux" (SOBEPS), with participants arriving from most European countries and as far as the USA.

The Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, CISU) is of course attending and participating with three papers on different aspects of the UFO research field:

- **Edoardo Russo** and **Gian Paolo Grassino** chose to examine the present status of European (and American) ufology;
- **Paolo Toselli's** paper is centered on the recent UFO abduction epidemics and tries to show its mystical and psychological overtones;
- **Maurizio Verga** could but talk about the use of computers in ufology, speaking of the Italian experience.

We think that our readers may be interested in reading the full texts, which were prepared in English (the official language in Brussels), so we're devoting a full 21 page issue of ITUFOR to the Congress' Italian papers.

ITUFOR-9 will accompany the December issue No. 6 of our journal "UFO -RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA".

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN UFOLOGY

Where is America Going To?

by Edoardo Russo & Gian Paolo Grassino

ABSTRACT

Does a European ufology exist? National differences, languages and specificities often make one think it does not. But if considered against the American ufology as a background, a common European framework does appear.

Both UFOs as a modern phenomenon and ufology were born in the USA in the late '40s, and imported to Europe around 1950. American and European ufology have followed similar patterns for years, America usually leading towards a scientific ufology.

Now this pattern has apparently broken down, as Americans seem to follow new fashions which look very much like typical themes of the Fifties (contactees, photo repeater cases, UFO crashes, cover-ups) and which have no analogy here in Europe, where ufologists have got more and more involved in a revisionist approach centered on the IFO problem and human sciences.

Cultural and historical reasons may be found, but the fact remains that the two Atlantic sides seem to be moving along different lines.

Far from trying to establish who is right and who is wrong, it remains that a European ufology is seen emerging by contrast, which stands or falls by itself.

The issue now is to make its development easier by improving exchanges of experiences and establish a common ground, which is not necessarily implying a sort of federation but methodological standards.

Europe is indeed a fashionable concept, these days, and everybody is loudly dreaming of the fatal year 1993, when the European Community will come to real life.

Where are we ufologists, as of Europe? Does a European ufology really exist? Will a Ufological Europe soon exist?

If you look at what is published in UFO journals and bulletins around the Continent, you may easily answer "No!": differences and specificities are quite consistent.

NATIONAL DIFFERENCES

The "language barrier" is a main reason: out of 18 West-European countries, as many as 14 different languages are spoken, and often local

ufologists are not able to understand other languages than their own one.

Also historical differences may be easily found: some national ufologies have had a leading role, often because their languages were widely spoken all around the world (just think of France and Great Britain) and more intense exchanges helped them to keep an international-wide view of the UFO problem and research. Others remained more closed upon themselves, either as of input or as of output, and their contribute has been very small (or at least very little known abroad).

The last is the case of Italy, but it may become a good vantage point in order to watch world-wide UFO research without any national chauvinism.

Specific national areas of interest may be found for given periods of time: for example sky-watching was well-diffused in the UK in the '60s, in France and Italy in the '70s, in Scandinavia in the '80s; the "Ummo" issue is rarely affecting non-Spanish ufologies; humanistic ufology was peculiar of small British groups in the early '70s, while a heavily revisionist wave hit France in the late '70s. The earthlight debate has barely passed British boundaries. Even specific UFO/IFO types may be found: the lighted toy-balloons are said to cause as many as 31% of German sightings in the last twelve years (and very few UFO landings are reported from that country), while an epidemics of "laser-beams" has been produced all over Italy in the last few years; French contactees look very different from the Italian ones, and if only you consider UFO abductions around Europe you will find very different situations as of both quantity and quality of reports.

Our purpose here is to show that, aside from all above-mentioned (and other) differences and specificities, European national ufologies do already have something in common; something quite consistent and as essential as a methodological approach may be.

In order to understand it, we will take the liberty of single it out by contrast, and the trick will be looking at European vs. American ufology (by "America" we mean the USA), using our overseas colleagues as a background.

We have to add that we have no intention of criticising American ufologists, as we greatly respect their work. (Indeed you might say that we, Italian ufologists, have always been and still are quite American-dependant). So we beg their pardon for using them in what will sometime possibly look like a strong opposition, but that's for the sake of the argument.

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF AMERICAN UFOLOGY

Indeed the UFO phenomenon was born in America, way back in 1947, and only later was it "imported" to Europe, where the first real UFO sightings wave was that of 1950. Some Italian ufologists even (jokingly) say that flying saucers arrived to Europe as part of the "Marshall plan", as well as chewing gums, rock'n'roll music and all the "Americana" we were flooded since we became a province of the Empire.

And ufology itself was undisputably born in the USA: any history

of ufology can but include as classic names as Arnold, Mantell, Keyhoe, Lorenzen, Ruppelt, APRO, NICAP and so on. And where else could you find the Project Blue Book, UFO-CAT, and later the MUFON and CUFOS examples?

The road towards a scientific ufology has always been shown by America: Jacques Vallée and J. Allen Hynek with their terminology and classification systems, as well as computerized analysis; but also the road away from the ETH was indicated by U.S. authors like John Keel and again Vallée.

Think of anything in the '50s and '60s, and the USA were the leaders, while Europe's contribute was little more than Aimé Michel and the "Flying Saucer Review".

Even as of the UFO phenomenon evolution, the USA were nearly always of avant-garde: the Daylight Discs arrived there in 1947, the contactees in the early '50s, the "soft" and psychical CE's of the late '60s, the abductees epidemics in the mid-'70s. Do you remember, the 1958-1964 period is often called the "Dark Age" because of the lull in USA UFO sightings, even if great waves occurred at the same time in Europe and South America.

In a word, America was the reference mark and a sort of ideal country for ufologists all around the world. If something had to happen, it was there.

We could easily speak of a "mythical role" of the classic USA ufology, up to at least the mid-'70s.

WHAT ABOUT EUROPE ?

At that point, something began to change. It may have been on the "scientific ufology" side (since 1977 it was France who lead the way, thanks to the civilian scientific study of UFOs by GEPAN); but we believe it may be better traced in the different consequences of "paraphysical" ufology.

While John Keel and Jacques Vallée looked like unheard voices in America, (where the predominance of ETH has never been seriously questioned by UFO students), they obtained a greater success among the European UFO intellectuals, especially in Great Britain and France. It was only small groups, at first, but slowly they grew and heavily influenced the whole national scene.

For example, the English "MUFOB" (now "Magonia") team did not remain a voice calling in the desert: the "humanistic turn" they gave to what was then called the "new ufology" was later amplified by popular authors like Jenny Randles, which on turn gradually influenced a whole generation of British ufologists, to a point that now it's rare to find "true believers" in alien spaceships among the best known and most active UFO investigators in the UK.

As another example, Vallée's influence (especially "The Invisible College") pushed French ufology in the mid-'70s towards parapsychological overtones (just think of Pierre Viéroudy, Jean-Jacques Jaillat, Jean Giraud) and this on turn had a major effect upon the sudden "change of mind" of Michel Monnerie and the other "nouvelles ufologues" which in the late '70s turned abruptly to skepticism. They

passed over, but the effect was that a new generation of French ufologists is no longer committed to "believing" but maintain an "open-mind" position which helped very much in approaching the scientific milieu.

Well, the revisionism was a "tendance" in or around 1980, and you may find examples in the USA, too: Allan Hendry, Richard Haines and Alvin Lawson, or even the "MUFON UFO Journal" publishing skeptical articles by CSICOP members like James Oberg! But it was a different "revisionism", less "ideological" and more "pragmatical" (think of Monnerie vs. Hendry on the IFO issue), and we will see that it's important.

Indeed, some differences between the two sides of Atlantic were quite visible as early as 1980, and not only as of ufology.

You'll have surely read or heard the "American Empire" (as a cultural concept) is in crisis: we don't know for sure if that's true, as we are not sociologists (though at least one Italian "ufologist" loves to claim he is one). But somehow the American model is no longer such, as you may see in several different areas. (An interesting example may be the European juvenile sub-culture since (say) 1977, when there was quite a break after several decades of strong dependance from America.)

What about the American model of ufology? As we said, up to a certain point, USA and Europe followed the same path, let's say the same "escalation of hypotheses": from Martian scoutships to interstellar travelers, from ETH to parapsychical issues, from Flying Saucers to UFOs (and IFOs, too).

Now it seems it's no longer so, as if something has broken down. In particular, since 1987 it looks like the circle of history has closed upon itself and ufology's got back to square one, with a difference: Europe left by the tangent while America is beginning again the merry-go-round.

Let's explain that.

AMERICAN UFOLOGY NOW

Strieber's "Communion", Hopkins' alien abductors, Gary Kinder's book about the Swiss contactee Eduard Meier, the (really) "cosmic cover-up" of MJ-12, the Gulf Breeze photo repeater case: don't we Europeans stand bewildered and astonished at the American ufology seemingly getting back to what it was in the Glorious Fifties?

Here are again those noisy contactees (now abductees); a new kind of George Adamski nurturing endless controversy about his wonderful yet unbelievable "scout-ship" pictures; ufologists crying for "government cover-up"; and all that mess!

As seen from Europe, USA ufologists seem to have entered a time machine and got 30 years back. Moreover, they are presently debating about things (which are the central issues there) we have no parallel with, here: in Europe you're bound to find no saucer crashes, few abductions (except perhaps in the UK), smaller Government cover-ups (would you imagine the Italian government successfully trying to conceal

anything?).

In that sense, we said: it looks like the circle has closed down and it's back to square one. Well, it's not exactly repeating the past, of course, it's on a "different level": as of cover-ups, they've got a powerful instrument as FOIA, and it's no longer question of the Air Force debunking the UFO reality but the President himself establishing a Majestic-12 group who exactly knew they were aliens and even got their corpses; it's no longer simply examining Adamski's photos through the magnifying lens, now we have sophisticated photo analysis techniques confirming Meier's or Gulf Breeze pictures; contactees' evidence is no longer an alien pancake but odd body scars and ghost pregnancies.

Times have changed of course and it all is up-to-date in the '80s, so let's say that such more than a circular pattern it is somewhat a helicoid path: the "first generation" ETH was good for accounting Daylight Discs in the '50s. Now that there are no more UFO reports you don't even need a trigger-sighting, not even a time-lapse: you need nothing more than a vague fear for rightfully suspecting a suppressed alien abduction memory!

At the same time, European ufologists seem to follow very different lines of search, as you may read in most Old Continent's UFO journals.

As of Europe, the real big difference between the '50s and the '80s is, we believe, that then ufologists "knew" the truth and what the saucers were, while we presently think we don't know any longer. Early ufologists were not so much researchers as they were public educators trying to persuade people of the alien spacecrafts' reality. How many investigation reports dating back from the '50s can be found in your files? Most "classic" cases are to be found only in books and UFO-zines, but hardly do they include those data which are presently required from the average investigator.

(And yet, if you have to judge from some recent pieces of investigative work, some American colleagues have forgotten all what Hendry and Haines and Fowler did teach and preach as of field investigation methodology.)

Another major feature of the "new" European ufology is that we no longer consider IFOs as "false UFOs". Indeed IFOs have become a conceptual reality in Europe and are presently acknowledged as a part of the problem, whereas our overseas colleagues still regard them as little more than products for the dust-bin: identify and eliminate them. A widely diffused concept here is that the same proportion of 9 to 1 points to their importance and they're as interesting and instructive, too.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT ?

So it seems as if we have sort of two ufologies, as Jenny Randles recently put it: an American one, concentrating almost exclusively on abduction reports, UFO crashes and Government cover-ups; and an European one, more concerned with IFOs and human sciences.

How could it happen? In this we cannot blame the language barrier! It's true, most American ufologists cannot read other languages, but

they can always read the British authors. And anyway we can read them and still can follow them, but we didn't any longer and we took on our own road.

Some socio-ufologist may say the European "son" reached maturity (at 40 years old it's nearly time) and now wants to kill the America "father", but it would be ludicrous (though the afore-mentioned self-styled UFO Italian sociologist did say something to that effect in order to explain some recent local polemics).

Indeed basic attitudes of American and European ufologists towards each other do not differ much from the average man's attitudes: Americans tend to think Europeans are much too complicated in their abstract reasoning, in "behind-ology" and with their noses up to the sky instead of being pragmatical in their approach to reality. And Europeans tend to think of Americans as gullible, naive, superficial people, unable to see farther than the end of their nose and to detach themselves from the face value of things.

Of course such stereotyped images are rough and inadequate, but they nonetheless contain a grain of truth.

The practical (pragmatical) culture of Americans as opposed to the more theoretical European one is reflected by the difference between some "revisionist" authors like Richard Haines and Allan Hendry, there, and Jenny Randles or the French "new wave", here.

And often we can well understand some American colleagues' impatience for what does look like groundless cerebral elucubrations.

That problem is well illustrated by some recent Budd Hopkins' reasonings, on the line "we don't need abductions theoreticians, but abduction investigators: come and do the hard work instead of philosophizing from your comfortable armchairs". It's true: it would be good for some UFO philosophers to get involved in field investigations and "touch" the phenomenon. On the other hand, it would actually be naive to go interviewing witnesses without a careful background training, unless you just want to get easy confirmation for your own beliefs.

Ironically, abduction researchers, who refute any psychological implication for "their" percipients, seem to be unaware that they're involving themselves (and their percipients, alas) in that same socio-psychological garbage they claim European colleagues are getting muddled into.

The different part played by the mass media in the U.S.A. and in Europe may also be relevant. Media attitude towards people and people's attitude towards media seem to be very different, if you look at newspapers and TV. Just as an example, we are told Americans are fond of finding their names in the local newspaper, while in Italy, for example they're afraid of that and usually don't want their names to be published. And the media treatment was probably the cause of the great success of Whitley Strieber's "Communion" in America, while at the same time it received a very cold reception in Europe (in Italy but also in Great Britain!).

We also think that it's significative that America claims to be in a lull of sightings since 1973 or so. That would explain why you have to resort to:

- alleged crashes which took place back forty years ago;
- "invisible (indeed) epidemics" of abduction cases without any conscious UFO sighting;
- bedroom visitors once kept outside any UFO report catalogue or file (do you remember Bloecher-Webb's CE-III class E: no UFO seen in correlation with entity);
- tons of reports (and photos) from a single "repeater" witness (Mr "Ed" or Billi Meier, that's basically the same).

Abductions seem to mark the final separation, in that they are to become the American ufology. They undoubtedly constitute the highest strangeness reports, but do they deserve such a totalizing attention? Are we sure that a solution to the UFO enigma may come only from the study of such alleged alien kidnappings.

What are we to do of such intrinsically un-studiable things as Hopkins' intruders: there is no proof or direct evidence, the intruders keep a constant control of the situation, it's substantially a transcendent reality. At this point we can only either:

- wait for the contact, or
- arm ourselves and watch the skies for shooting down the "V-visitors", or
- conclude that "we're property" or already "colonized" and retire ourselves from ufology à la Aimé Michel.

If you want to call it "-ology"...

Will we arrive at having no contact point at all between the Atlantic? In at least two fields it may well be:

- the social level: a different public has got different interests (remember: Strieber) and a different way to see the phenomenon and its students;
- the ufologists themselves; think of Hopkins: doesn't he, too, look for a "different" UFO experience: hypnosis-created instead of investigated. (We always wonder: perhaps we too would, if we tried; but would that still be ufology or something else?).

WHO IS RIGHT ?

On the other side, our American friends might well ask us what we are talking about and conclude that indeed we are no longer UFO-logists; and they may be right, since we no longer study what most of them mean by "UFO". (But can they correctly say they study UFOs, when they actually are on the trail of alien spacecrafts they "modestly" hide behind the more scientific-sounding "UFO" label?)

Somebody here arrived to claim that perhaps we should say we study "unusual aerial phenomena" (not "anomalous", since some are not intrinsically exotic).

But at this point, perhaps we do have different objects of study.

In a certain sense, there are also similarities between present American and European avant-garde ufologists: UFO sightings are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg both for American abduction researchers and for the European socio-psychological "new ufologists". But those are different icebergs: the first is a massive genetic test campaign by alien intruders, the second is just one facet of a multifaceted "modern folklore" phenomenon.

Thus, in the least, what we see emerging are two different models of ufology, two concepts of reality, each of them possibly being the correct one (if one is to be).

Well - you could say - where's the problem? It's you who said each national UFO community has its own "concept of ufology", so what?

What we want to emphasize is a danger: that we Europeans and them Americans are beginning to go in opposite directions, and (what is worst) they seem to go down a dangerous way even they can't imagine where it will lead them. As a first result, it has rehabilitated contactees, though in a new form, so that they are now accepted (and promoted) by ufologists, who even believe they act in a scientific manner (how can you oppose Philip Klass when he notes that Budd Hopkins' concept of "skepticism" is so broad that he feels he cannot refute anything?).

We are told by linguists that American and English as languages are getting slowly apart and that in the next 100 years they won't be able to understand each other anyway. It looks as if such a process has already gone up to a good distance, since we seem not to talk about the same things.

What we fear is that we arrive at a complete misunderstanding, at having incommensurable UFO realities. And we are near to that.

Indeed, while we express our astonishment at the recent American developments, our overseas friends don't seem able to cope up with our criticism and only try to exorcise us as "debunkers of a new kind", (and that's the way some Italian old-styled UFO-buff described us).

But that's wrong: we are not "negative believers" of the CSICOP kind, and Michel Monnerie was writing ten years ago, and a very different approach has developed since.

It seems difficult to explain America that European UFO research has evolved to a point where it's no longer similar to a black-and-white battlecamp between the goodies (us believers) and the bad guys (them debunkers): more and more often you may find ufologists holding very different ideological positions living and working together without just trying to bite each other. Indeed, it's only tolerance for different opinions, and none of us should feel entitled to possess "the Truth": we're all searching for answers, and we've not yet got them.

And here lies the hopeful solution: a greater tolerance for each others' opinions. Are we prepared to understand that ufology itself may be influenced by sociological differences and so it is legitimate that each one has its own kind of ufology?

THE WAY AHEAD

Even if in reality such extreme opposition as we have painted may not exist, but its representation has served us to get aware of ourselves: a conclusion we feel entitled to reach is that a European ufology already exists de facto, because of a common substratum of "modus operandi" and style of reasoning, as opposed to the American one. A different course of history in the last fifteen years left its mark,

and European ufologists are now ideologically nearer to each other and more distant from the American way.

It looks as if we can no longer expect America to show us the way, and we no longer have that importing channel at work across the Atlantic. Indeed we are already walking on our own legs, even if nobody tells it as it is, and we all still speak of "ufology" as if it was one and only, while at the moment we do have two ufologies.

We only need better contacts and exchange, and here it's up to us to define what and how to do to improve it.

But since our affinities are more "ideological" (or better: methodological), we feel that the common ground for a European ufology has to be searched in these issues, rather than in some sort of "federation".

Personally, from our own experience in organizing Italian ufologists, as well as participating in some previous attempts to build international structures, we don't believe international federations may succeed. But we are ready to take part in such a scheme, if it can be useful, and we're prepared to share our experiences with others.

Those same structural differences in national scenes probably render a European federation too big and complex a thing to handle. The very different national organizations render it difficult: some countries have one national center, others do not even have a national federation but only local groups and researchers; if you choose to have organizations represented (as in PICUR), you may find rivalries within each country; if you choose single individuals (as in Hynek's World UFO Association) they may not grant local adoption of common strategies or methodologies. Moreover, just think of travel difficulties (how many times a country was represented abroad by a now inactive individual without any following, whose only merit was to be there!).

A more flexible approach is to be adopted if we want to get to an international cooperation going beyond an exchange of publications and information, by establishing common standards (as PICUR tried, but perhaps it was too early), while at the same time respecting each other's specific interests or local situations.

In that, we at Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici have got an uncommon experience of putting together all and any (serious) attitude: total skeptics akin to Robert Sheaffer, doubters à la Lawson, agnostics like Haines, true believers in ET visitors, supporters of parapsychical theories, all them have come to live together within CISU; as well as pure researchers and public educators, field investigators and sky-watchers all found their place within a common framework where we only agreed on a "minimum common denominator" of what all of us engaged to do.

A closer relationship and interfacing between private UFO researchers is not only useful, it's needed if we want to get on towards a solution for the UFO problem. Europe as a whole has got a great potential of men, of ideas, of data and of experiences.

Let's try and put it all together.

THE ABDUCTION MYSTICISM

by Paolo Toselli

ABSTRACT

It seems that abduction reports have undergone a qualitative modification in last few years. They not only look more and more similar to contactee tales from the past decades, but also seem more and more impregnated with mysticism.

The obvious parallel with ecstatic experiences is strengthened by the fact that the lesser number of abduction reports in Europe Catholic countries is compensated by a very wave of religious apparitions in the last three years. The hypothesis is advanced that both abductions and BVM apparitions may respond to the same or a similar kind of "need".

A little known psychological phenomenon called "amnesic ictus" is also proposed as cause for some time-lapse cases.

Two recent books (Whitley Strieber's "Communion" and Budd Hopkins' "Intruders"), as well as the debate about them, seem to mark the beginning of a new phenomenon within the UFO phenomenon.

The two books appear similar and different at the same time. "Intruders" looks like a ufological book but indeed is much more like to a "contact with another dimension", a mixture of unbelievable reincarnation experiences and contacts with otherworld, hidden behind a veil of "technologism" and an abundant sex sauce.

"Communion" obviously suffered of some Hopkins' influences since Strieber was assisted by Hopkins but (even if the author keeps on stressing it's "A True Story") it is rather akin to an inner novel, to a mind flight researching himself and even to Ian Watson's "Miracle Visitors" (what a coincidence!).

So the abduction phenomenon has changed? Abductions "of the Hopkins' kind" (if you allow me such a definition since his role seems essential) as well as abductions "of the Strieber's kind" bear only a superficial resemblance to case histories collected ten or twenty years ago.

A qualitative modification took place over time, from aseptic medical examinations by "alien doctors", to a continued monitoring of abductees along all their lives, with a first childhood encounter and following events (often typically mystic/esoteric in nature).

THE RETURN OF THE CONTACTEES

All this looks like a sly return to contactees, but it's not the same as in the '50s: a new form of mystical contactee is born in America, and that is supported by ufologists themselves.

The feature of the first "abduction/contact" in their childhood or teen-age reminds me very closely of some reports from contactees in the '70s.

For example the Spanish Jacques Bordas, whose whole life was changed by what looked like an alien intervention. He claimed he was adopted by extraterrestrial beings and to have been touched by "another" energy. At the age of 12 (another coincidence with Strieber) he suffered from a hormonal deficit and was very fat. One night, as he lied in his bed, he "felt" he had to go out on the terrace. There (dream or reality?) three triangle-shaped metallic crafts landed and a small being (not taller than him) came out, wearing a white overall and a mantle. "We will satisfy your need to become a strong man. We have adopted you and will not leave you. We will come back to visit you in the future". The stranger gave him a kind of dark cake and ordered him to eat it (another coincidence). Since that moment his trouble disappeared.

Healing from chronic diseases, developing healing abilities, spiritually awakening, have all been reported by several "abductees". Others showed a greater attention for philosophical and existential issues. Several abductees have become "contactees" (in the new meaning of the term). For example Betty Hill began to interest herself in UFOs, to the point of becoming an inveterate ufologist/believer with contactee-like features: with her husband she tried experiments to contact UFOs and she admitted she could communicate mentally with them in order to draw them. Charles Hickson says he's being watched by the same UFO creatures who abducted him while he was fishing from a pier in Mississippi in 1973. "I have the feeling they know where I am and what I'm doing at all times". That was a typical theme of contactism, and now it's being more and more often reported by abductees.

The extraterrestrial motif seems to be only a pretext to display an extraordinary knowledge, and it expresses abductees' strong conviction in their own experiences, experiences that we can describe as revelations of a fantastic type. Percipients find themselves in a value-bringing position: they've got extraordinary knowledge and they've been chosen by extraterrestrials so to be either their spokesmen (contactees) or their victims (abductees).

THE NEW MYSTICISM

Moreover, the abduction phenomenon is more and more impregnated with mysticism. New abduction reports look remarkably similar to religious experiences masked with a technological image which is acceptable to the modern Western man. It may not be by chance that such a new phenomenon developed in America in the '80s, now that it's usual to talk about transferring human embryos and about genetic manipulation. Let's not forget the ethical issues raised by such experiments.

The new abduction phenomenon seems to be very much American. We don't find such an inflation of case histories in Europe. British abductions show a lot of differences from the recent American ones; very, very few reports did come from Italy and France and nobody ever told us of extraterrestrial babies.

Indeed, if in Italy we had nearly no abduction case, another form of mysticism has developed in the last few years: apparitions of Beloved Virgin Mary. Since 1986 we have been having a real wave: 58 reports, 24 of them in 1987. And a recurrent feature is the so-called "celestial phenomena" (rotating sun, luminous balls, unusual lights), often typically UFO-like.

It looks as if highly spectacular, strongly symbolical UFO apparitions are a common (though differentiated) feature to North and South America, while BVM apparitions are typical of Mediterranean, Latin countries. What if they were just expressing the same kind of need?

In fact some interesting coincidences do exist between "ecstatic trance" features and abductees reported experiences.

In ecstatic states, time perception may be altered: events either take place very fast or are extended for an incredibly long time. Also the space world may be distorted: distances and situations are modified; the body feels like broadly expanding or contracting up to dissolve; it loses its weight and floats in space. Among trance-accompanying phenomena, you may find: the feeling of an increased ethical energy; certainty of an "ineffable" revelation; the mirage of a growth in intelligence or knowledge; the feeling of an "invisible presence" or of a divine direction.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Several abduction cases might also be just psychological disorders with delirium symptoms. In the so-called imagination delirium, for example, while there is no personality disgregation and good intellectual abilities and affections are maintained, a great frequency of fantastic, para-logical themes are to be found, in which imagination elements play an important role. Deliriums are marked by childhood and archaic/universal myths, especially fabulous and supernatural ones. It should be noted that such people still have a relatively complete personality and so can live their delirium with a certain detachment and still have a good adaptation to social life.

Most frequent delirium themes are those of "influencing" or personal assault: the subject feels like attacked, tormented in his body from far away, by electronic means or odd-looking devices (apparecchi) by more or less identified persecutors.

How can you avoid to see a nearly perfect coincidence with Hopkins' abductees reports?

But some sort of delirium seems to have caught American ufologists too, some of them discovering to be abductees themselves, and the rest as a bulk accepting acritically the whole phenomenology of "new" abductions, without the slightest doubt about the objective nature of these reports.

Indeed, several experiences later entering the "real" life were first described to them as mere dreams (and believed just to be dreams) by the same abductees. "Incubi" and "succubae" from the demonic/esoteric tradition come to our mind, which had sexual intercourse with humans in the dream time. Hopkins' book has a full chapter of them.

A man/woman needs only have a "missing time" or an irrational fear for a given place, road or wood, in order to be a potential "abductee" and to become a real one in the hands of some artless ufologist.

Perhaps nobody told these "ufologists" (and the psychologists/psychiatrists surrounding them) of a little known psychological phenomenon called "amnesic ictus". Under such label particular states have been collected which are showing in normally sound people. Unchaining factors include: intense emotions, exposure to cold, sight or psychic weariness, anomalous positions of head and neck for a long period, etc.

It usually has an acute onset and the typical clinical feature is a heavy disorder in memory fixation, usually for a few hours. During that time the subject, who shows no consciousness alteration, is not confused, is not aphasic, is aware of his own identity, is still capable of some performances (for example he can drive home, though with some hesitation), simply forgets all events and behavior taking place in that period. The situation terminates with more or less rapidity and the individual recovers his mnesic abilities; only a blank remains about the entire episode and sometimes about a brief antecedent time.

Sometime a slight blood-pressure increase is reported, as well as some neurological deficit (transitory pyramidal disorders, temporary alterations in the field of vision). Encephalography is scarcely significative (at most a generic, diffused dysrhythmia can be noted) and that demonstrates that it's not a epileptic state.

Very often the amnesic ictus remains a disorder by itself, without further consequences, though a tendency has been reported for relapsing. It is usually interpreted as a transient vascular insufficiency in the vertebral base zone.

So we don't need to bother phantom genetic manipulators coming from who knows where, in order to account for a missing time. But even if no abductee was ever hit by an "amnesic ictus", it's easy to create "ghost-" or "false memories" in highly suggestible people (ever wondered why all abductees are so easily hypnotized?), who are searching for a value-bringing experience, elevating them from the dullness of their uneventful, everyday world.

In the end, I don't believe there is so much difference between believing to be the "chosen one" by extraterrestrial angels in order to diffuse a spiritual message of world redemption, or "the chosen one" by alien genetic manipulators in order to "scientifically" create a new hybrid breed.

Maybe the only difference is that in the second instance, it is ufologists themselves who are responsible for the phenomenon.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY: A BREAKTHROUGH IN UFO RESEARCH

The Italian Example

by Maurizio Verga

Serious UFO research always had the problem to handle huge amounts of raw data to create well-organized database and to process statistical analyses. Forty years of worldwide sightings supplied us millions of data which are near impossible to use correctly and quickly by hand. And as ufology is essentially founded on such data you realize that the methodology to handle them is extremely important. It is enough to think to UFO catalogues of the sixties or seventies, which took months to their authors: analyses on those cases were simply frequency distributions; also because time necessary to process other kinds of more sophisticated tests was beyond the possibility of those pioneer researchers. Nowadays, computer technology offers us an impressive computing power evolving day after day: a today's \$ 7,000 personal computer give us performances near unthinkable a quarter of a century ago.

The great diffusion of home and personal computers among common people (and ufologists are included in them !) leads us to a new era. Those machines can store, process and retrieve as many data as included in a book in a few seconds by a relatively low investment. Time when the single ufologist had a paper file of hundreds of handwritten cards is finished: spare time is always limited and available data have become so complex that sophisticated analyses are needed. The personal computer is really becoming necessary for each serious ufologist who wants to carry out a comprehensive research on large quantities of data, quickly, error-free and by high-level tools. In such a perspective, the modern ufologist is becoming near like a professional researcher, as our matter of interest compel us to do this if approached under a scientific point of view. Of course, it isn't enough to own a computer to be able to carry out serious works: knowledge of alleged software, power of hardware, good sense of organization and a good methodology to handle data are surely necessary. Otherwise, the ufologist is just like a boy using a fine sophisticated computer for videogames or kitchen recipes and nothing more.

Beyond the very first attempts in using computer to store and produce statistics dated sixties (Jacques Vallee teaches to us), since the first years of the eighties home and personal computing touched ufologists. They started to use this new tool as a file, where to store and retrieve his own files, from UFO sightings to colleagues' addresses. Then they learned to use it like a more sophisticated typewriter and someone other to publish bulletins and magazines. But the general impression is that no

one knows what to do by it: applications developed on personal computers by ufologists are generally quite simple and, often, useless. It is a real pity: to organize the work of each single researcher could lead to the establishment of really worthy databases and statistical analyses, just as an example. Unfortunately, ufologists using a PC are generally far one from the other or, even, placed in different countries: no one knows what the other is doing and so double works are very common.

In 1985 I started a new publication, entirely devoted to the use of computer in ufology: "THE COMPUTER UFO NEWSLETTER". Its main objective was the establishment of a forum where to present and debate past and current applications of computer in our field, new commercial or amateur software to be of use for our researches, proposals of new works, the search for a common kind of record where to store data coming from a UFO sighting, news about what ufologists from all over the world were developing about such subject and more. Following its spirit, it was written and printed entirely by a personal computer: seven different issues have been published and a new one is being to be released. Most ufologists and UFO magazines showed a great interest to this experiment, a clear proof that our people recognize the importance of computers for our hobby.

THE ITALIAN EXAMPLE

Even though Italy hasn't as many installed PCs as United States or West Germany, personal and home computers are very common and, some time ago, fashionable too. As one of the directors of the leading Italian UFO organization, Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici (C.I.S.U.), I realized a lot of members of our national group were buying a computer and they wanted to use it for UFO research. In 1986 I founded the "Rete Ufologica Computerizzata" (R.U.C.), which English translation is Computer UFO Network. That was the starting point of a series of enterprises that cannot be found in any other foreign country, as the number of people involved, produced material and results. The chief aims were two: the storing of the whole Italian UFO casuistry (about 10,000 entries) under the form of provincial files and the production of texts for the many C.I.S.U. publications. Parallely, projects about the development of new software, evaluation and use of available commercial software (for example astronomy programs able to identify the position of stars and planets at a given date), production of demos to be displayed during UFO conferences or TV shows and development of statistical studies about different kinds of Italian UFO sightings were proposed to network members and quickly started. A special Bulletin named "Bollettino R.U.C." was published to supply detailed information about works in progress and any kind of useful information about computers and ufology. More, it was a good mean to propose members what to do. RUC membership arrived at about eighty people, most of which gave a near regular contribution. The amount of data and information entered and processed by those people was really impressive and we think it

is the only example of an organized team of ufologists working together in all over the world. The most common computer among members is the IBM compatible PC, followed by the famous Commodore 64: this one was essentially used as a low cost terminal where to insert basic data of all Italian sightings. It is practically a toy, but a lot of people owns it and it is very easy to use for non-trained users. Most members of CISU collecting UFO sightings of their own province (in order to establish the national UFO catalogue directly on computer: at moment, we have more than 6,000 entries and a first version will be released soon) made just use of a C-64 to store those data on a floppy disc or a tape. Then all the data coming from all participant to the project ("Progetto Cataloghi Regionali") were transferred on a Compaq 386/20 PC and processed to produce a complete national catalogue. At the same time, many people were sending to the national headquarters of CISU articles and papers to be published in the Center's magazines and monographs under the form of files produced on Commodore, Apple or IBM machines. Transferring them in an Apple Macintosh wasn't a problem: desk-top publishing software and laser printer were later used to print out the final product.

Due to limits of space, here it is a brief list of some of the works and enterprises made by computers in Italy.

(1) Establishment of a 6,000 and more entries database referring to the national Italian UFO sightings catalogue, available under the form of dBASE III MS-DOS files (92, one for each province, plus a general one). One big file, about 1,000 cases from Tuscania, has been established on a Apple IIgs. Work is currently in progress and it will produce a complete print-out, with special list sorted according to the type of sighting and place of observation. Statistical analyses and their display by 3-D graphics are under development to produce a monography.

(2) Two special databases have been prepared by this author: ITACAT and TRACAT. The first one refers to close encounters (near 500 at time of writing) of any kind, the second one to trace cases. Both catalogues are available in dBASE III MS-DOS files (Commodore 64 and Apple II versions are available too) both in Italian and English language. A detailed statistical survey of ITACAT and TRACAT (plus comparisons with 4,000 Italian raw sightings and foreign samples of landing cases), including a lot of tables, cross tables and graphs. The whole ITACAT 500-page manuscript (in Italian language) is available as Wordstar/ASCII MS-DOS files.

(3) Demo programs to be shown during public conferences and similar occasions, where fine coloured screens appear on a monitor supplying detailed information about CISU, UFOs and ufology. Available for Commodore 64 and PC-IBM.

(4) A database about foreign UFO books and publications owned by Italian ufologists: this project about available literature resources is maintained by CISU member Marco Bottaini on a Apple IIgs. Paolo Toselli, another well known member, has prepared an

interesting database about articles from the scientific literature of potential interest for the serious UFO researcher: each entry displays an abstract of the related article, plus full references. Software runs on a Apple IIc.

(5) Different types of computer (essentially PC IBM and Macintosh) are currently used to check position of astronomical bodies in order to test possibilities of explanation for most nocturnal lights sightings. Computer graphic packages able to allow the painting on the screen have been used to draw sketches of phenomena related by witness or to illustrate the sequence of the case itself.

(6) First in Europe, CISU has established a Bulletin Board System (that is a sort of interactive database to be connected via modem and able to offer many services, including electronic mail) completely devoted to ufology: its name is UFO B.B.S. The first system, based on a IBM AT with 20 Mbytes hard disk was placed in this author's house. It was operative two nights per week, offering a large quantity of information about UFOs, ufology, latest Italian sightings, catalogues of cases (including close encounters), debates about the matter and information about C.I.S.U. and its publications. It could be accessed via modem at 300 or 1200 baud by any kind of computer. At moment, it is out of work due to the change of hardware and software: anyway, another system is active in Rome ("U-Link") 12 hours a day, seven days per week, offering to users the same information. They can read them on the screen or download them on disk for further use. This new service, which received a lot of publicity by most Italian newspapers, attracted the interest of both ufologists and common people: many people became members of CISU just thanks to the B.B.S. by which they got acquainted about the existence of a national serious research center on UFOs. Some interesting projects about the use of the system have been started and first results are expected in the near future: for example, it will be used as a reference point where to send information about latest sightings, so that people can know them in very brief times. "UFO-BBS" and "U-Link" are services quite different from the French Minitel managed by the French group A.E.S.V., as there is a closer contact between the user and the operator. It is something like the American system "Computer UFO Network" and PARANET. Parallely, this author has established on many general purpose Bulletin Board Systems placed in Italy some UFO section, where users can find serious information about our subject. We receive a lot of requests for information, as well as people speaking about their own sightings. More, CISU is a regular subscriber of the biggest

(7) A professional high cost CAD system can be now used by C.I.S.U. at any time by this author to scan any kind of photo or slide showing a presumed UFO phenomenon. Hardware is based on a Compaq 386/25 with 300 Mb hard disk, state-of-art graphic card with 8 Mb video RAM, high-resolution 1280 x 1024 pixels color monitor able to handle nearly 17 millions of shades, color

scanners ranging from 300 to 900 dots per inch, ink-jet and thermal transfer color printers. We can display the photo or slide enlarged considerably and then open many different levels of zoom, as well as to manipulate the image in any way. This allows us to carry out an in-depth survey about the photo, in order to get a better evaluation of the same: for example, it will be possible to look for eventual features showing a faked nature of the picture. Practically, we'll be able to carry out something just like the US group G.S.W. did in past and recent times, even through by a non-dedicated hardware. But our available system can be accessed for many other projects CISU and its members are projecting in the field of computer graphics and in the creation of a images database (relating to UFO photos of phenomenon and traces mainly).

Everything related here is just only a part of my and CISU activities in that fascinating matter being applications of computer technologies in ufology. We have contacts, also through "THE COMPUTER UFO NEWSLETTER", with most of researchers in all over the world owning a computer and using it for UFO research. Personally, I have collected a lot of programs involving UFO research and running on different computers, from Commodore to Apple, from PC IBM to IBM System 36: any international ufologist interested in the matter can ask for them. The exchange of experience, suggestions and software is producing the growth of an interesting common knowledge: we hope to promote an international computer project in the future, involving all of these people and devoted to the computerized analyses of great quantities of raw and selected UFO sightings. Something similar is being to be started by our colleagues working on Fortean documentation for the establishment of an international Fortean database. We hope to follow them soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GIAN PAOLO GRASSINO has a university training in electronic engineering, works as a informatician and lives in Turin.

He has been interested in UFOs since 1974 and actively involved in ufology since 1976, when forming a local UFO group (CTRU) and editing its newsletter, which later merged into "Clypeus-Ufologia", of which he's been co-editor since 1979.

In 1978 he joined Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN) as Secretary of the Turin branch. In 1980 he was appointed Director for CUN files and archives, and in 1981 he became General Secretary of that Center.

He's a founding member of UPIAR Cooperative Society.

An experienced field investigator and public speaker, he is also a frequent writer whose articles and regular columns have been published in "Ufologia" and "Notiziario UFO". Since 1980 he is Regional Director of the Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina (SUF).

He is a founding member of the Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, CISU), the leading national UFO organization, formed in 1985 by former CUN members, and is presently CISU Secretary and co-editor-in-chief of the journal "UFO - rivista di informazione ufologica", the only regular UFO journal distributed in bookstores. He is active within the Italian UFO Computer Network (RUC), having work experiences as a programmer. He is also Coordinator of the Italian UFO Data Bank, an open information system for circulating all documents filed at CISU among interested researchers. In June 1987 he hosted and chaired the International UFO Congress held in Turin.

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He has been interested in UFOs since 1973 and actively involved in ufology since 1977, as editor-in-chief of "Ufologia" (supplement to the long-standing Italian journal "Clypeus"), a position he still maintains.

In 1978 he joined Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN) as Director of the Turin branch, then as Regional Coordinator. Since 1979 he's been Foreign Relations Director of CUN and as such he attended several UFO meetings in France, Switzerland, Austria and the United Kingdom, notably the First London International UFO Congress in 1979 (as speaker on the Italian UFO wave of 1978), and was appointed Italian representative within the Provisional International Committee on UFO Research (PICUR) and the Comité Européen de Coördination de la Recherche Ufologique (CECRU). In 1979 he was elected in CUN Council and resigned in 1980 to become assistant editor (and later editor-in-chief) of CUN journal "Notiziario UFO" (at that time distributed in the newsstands).

Since 1982 he's been also member of the Council of UPIAR Cooperative Society and assistant editor of the scientific UFO journal "URIP".

He has personally investigated tens of UFO/IFO sightings (among them the trace-landing cases in Alessandria, 1978 and Brescia, 1985, and the well-known abduction of nightwatcher Zanfretta in Genova, 1978), and is the author of CUN "Field Investigator's Manual".

His articles have been published in several UFO publications both in Italy and abroad, notably in the "MUFON UFO Journal" and "International UFO Reporter" (USA), "Flying Saucer Review" and "BUFORA Journal" (UK), "Lumières dans la nuit" (France), "Inforespace" (Belgium), "OVNI présence" (Switzerland). He is also a frequent speaker in conferences, radio and TV, and his interviews have frequently appeared in Italian newspapers.

After leaving CUN in 1985, he was a founding member of the Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, CISU), and is presently a Council member, co-editor-in-chief of the journal "UFO - Rivista di Informazione Ufologica" and editor of the "Italian UFO Reporter" (in English). He is also active within the Italian Computer UFO Network (RUC). He is also a MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) State Section Director for Northern Italy.

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PAOLO TOSELLI lives in Alessandria and works as a surveyor for the Italian National Gas Company (Italgas).

He's been active in ufology since 1973, when he founded a group called "A.C.O.M." and began editing its newsletter (which later merged into "Clypeus-Ufologia").

Since 1978 he's been one of the main proponents of the French "New Ufology" ideas in Italy, and has been focusing his interest on psychological and perceptive as well as sociological aspects of the UFO experience, with a special interest for IFO reports.

He joined Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN) in 1978 as Director of the Alessandria Branch, and has been a frequent contributor to its journal "Notiziario UFO". In 1982 he helped founding the "UPIAR Cooperative Society" and presented a now-classical paper on IFO reports under a socio-psychological viewpoint at the "First UPIAR Colloquium on Human Sciences and the UFO Phenomena" held in Salzburg (Austria) in that same year.

He left CUN in 1985, joining the newly-formed Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici (CISU). He is an active field investigator as well as a frequent author in UFO journals, both in Italy and abroad.

He is collecting scientific literature about UFOs and has published a catalogue of articles published in scientific journals about UFOs or subjects relevant to the ufologist. Another area of interest of his is commercial advertisings using the UFO image.

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MAURIZIO VERGA lives in Cernusco and works as a textile computer technician. He has been involved in ufology since 1977, his main interest being the systematic collection of Italian UFO landing reports, an argument he is the undisputed national expert, since he has built over the years an impressive, comprehensive file and catalogue of more than 400 such events: "ITA-CAT" (now also in a computerized version). In recent years his interest has focused onto CE-II's with ground traces, and has edited a complete catalogue of 180 Italian cases ("TRA-CAT", first published in 1982 and recently released by C.I.S.U. in its third edition). It was the trace-reports to lead him to develop a very critical attitude towards such kind of evidence and its handling by ufologists.

A prolific writer, his articles have been published in several UFO journals in Italy and mostly abroad (Flying Saucer Review, Lumières dans la nuit, Inforespace, Ovni présence, Magonia, BUFORA Journal, Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena, MUFON UFO Journal, UFO Sverige). In November 1985, he hosted and chaired the National UFO Congress in Cernusco.

Since 1985 he's been coordinating the Italian "Computer UFO Network" (Rete Ufologica Computerizzata, R.U.C.) which groups together ufologists owning a personal computer in doing common activities of data inputting and text processing, as well as operating a telematic UFO data bank; he edits the network bulletin and also the only existing publication on computer applications to ufology, the "Computer UFO Newsletter" (in English). He recently contributed two chapters (on ground traces and computers, of course) to the collective books "UFOs: 1947-1987" and "Phenomenon", edited by Hilary Evans and John Spencer.

A former member of Centro Ufologico Nazionale (C.U.N.), he was a founding member of Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici (C.I.S.U.), and he serves as a Council member. Several interviews have been published in the last few years about his computer work in the Italian press.

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